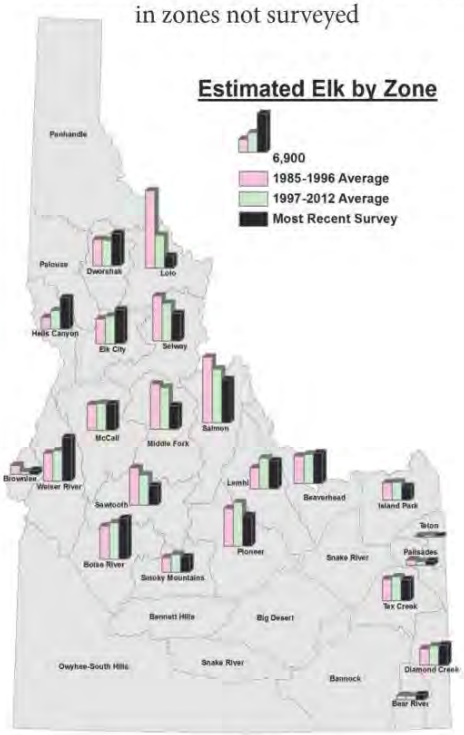
# Statewide Management Direction

Hunting Objectives • Current Status • Harvest Information

**Proposed 10-year Management Direction:**

- Continue to offer general-season elk hunting opportunities by managing elk populations, predator populations, and improving elk habitat;
- Enhance mature bull hunting opportunity;
- Aid elk hunters in selecting hunting areas that align with their desired hunting experience;
- Maintain the A-B elk tag structure, with adjustments to meet the needs/interests of today's hunter;
- Implement measures to reduce elk-caused crop and property damage;
- Improve public involvement in elk management decision-making;
- Reduce disease impacts on elk and livestock;
- Increase public knowledge and understanding of elk biology, management, and hunting.

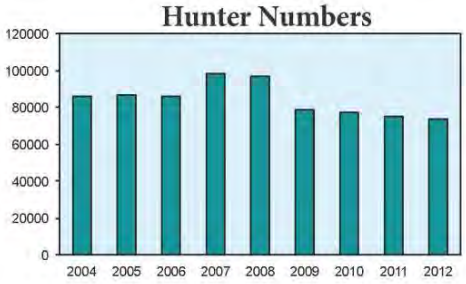
These totals are based on the last flight survey in each elk zone or estimates of elk numbers in zones not surveyed



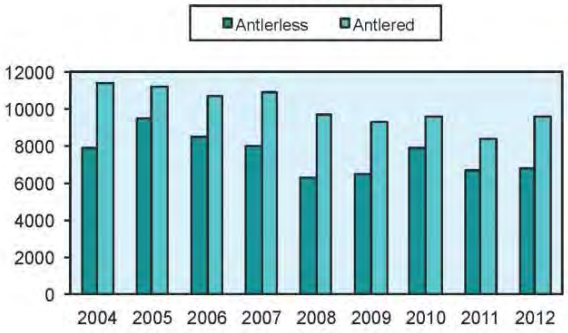

**Statewide Elk Population Status**

| | Cows | Calves | Bulls | Adult Bulls |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Totals | 70,000 | 20,500 | 17,100 | 9,200 |
| Bulls per 100 Cows | | | 24 | 13 |

**Statewide Elk Hunter Numbers**




**Statewide Elk Harvest**

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|---|---|---|---|
| **Square Miles =** | **83,542** | **3-Year Averages** | |
| **% Public Land =** | **67%** | **Hunters per square mile =** | 0.90 |
| **Major Land Type =** | | **Harvest per square mile =** | 0.20 |
| | | **Success Rate =** | 22% |
| | | **%6+ Points =** | 32% |

Statewide elk management direction (Table 6) is tiered down from the IDFG strategic plan (The Compass) and provides higher resolution for management objectives, taking into account stakeholder desires, agency resources, and resource opportunities and challenges. Table 7 assigns performance objectives and strategies to specific management directions. These performance objectives and strategies will form the foundation for future annual work plans, performance evaluations, and budget requests.

Table 6. Strategic plan objectives and corresponding elk management direction.

| Compass Objective | Elk Management Direction |
|---|---|
| Maintain or improve elk populations to meet the demand for elk hunting | When zones are meeting objectives, actively manage elk populations commensurate with habitat capabilities to maximize reproductive performance and overall herd health<br>When zones are below objectives, aggressively manage elk and predator populations, and improve habitat capabilities<br>Develop an elk monitoring program that includes modeling or monitoring zone population abundance during years between aerial surveys<br>Develop biological studies to improve population, predator, and habitat management capabilities<br>Implement proactive measures to minimize or compensate for elk depredations |
| Provide a diversity of elk hunting opportunities | Assess hunter desires for different types of elk hunting opportunities<br>Provide annual elk hunting opportunities<br>Provide a diversity of hunting opportunity, including socially desirable and biologically sustainable levels of antlerless and mature bull opportunity |
| Improve citizen involvement in the decision-making process | Increase open public input regarding elk management by increased use of electronic media<br>Increase the breadth of participation in elk management decisions by targeting opinions of a random sample of hunters for substantial decisions<br>Develop and maintain an open public sounding board list at the regional level<br>Provide timely feedback on decisions to the public |
| Increase the capacity of habitat to support elk | Improve key summer, winter, and transitional habitats on public and private lands |

Table 6. Continued.

| Compass Objective | Elk Management Direction |
|---|---|
| | that provide for elk populations to meet statewide objectives<br>Find new ways to efficiently and effectively monitor habitat<br>Integrate habitat assessment in the development of elk population goals<br>Increase IDFG involvement in long- and short-term land-use planning efforts by providing information, analysis, and recommendations to improve and preserve elk habitats |
| Eliminate impacts of wildlife diseases on elk populations, livestock, and humans | Minimize the influence of disease as a limiting factor in elk populations |
| Increase public knowledge and understanding of elk populations, hunting, and management in Idaho | Increase public understanding of elk ecology and management |

Table 7. Compass objective, statewide elk management direction, performance objectives, and strategies.

| Compass Objective: Maintain or improve elk populations to meet the demand for elk hunting | | |
|---|---|---|
| Management direction | Performance objective | Strategy |
| When zones are meeting objectives, actively manage elk populations commensurate with habitat capabilities to maximize reproductive performance and overall herd health | Maintain or improve calf:cow ratios ≥30 calves:100 cows<br>Maintain or improve natural adult cow annual mortality at <10%<br>Maintain or improve over-winter calf survival at >60% | Manage populations below the maximum carrying capacity of the habitat to ensure optimal herd condition and no long-term degradation of habitat<br>Develop antlerless harvest as a management tool to achieve population goals and provide hunting opportunity<br>Utilize an antlerless harvest decision process that considers habitat condition, population reproductive performance, survival, physiological condition, and population objectives<br>Establish long- and short-term numerical population objectives that represent maintenance of, or increase in, current elk populations |
| When zones are below objectives, aggressively manage elk and predator populations, and work to improve habitat capabilities (See "Compass Objective: Increase the capacity of habitat to support elk" in this table for details) | Increase calf:cow ratios to≥30 calves:100 cows<br>Reduce natural adult cow mortality to <10%<br>Increase over-winter survival of calves to >60% | Establish long- and short-term numerical population objectives that represent maintenance of, or increase in, current elk populations<br>Reduce harvest in 1 or both segments (cow or bull) of the population<br>Use the procedure to cap zone harvest as the first step in reducing harvest , unless the specific situation warrants more drastic action; the cap can be phased over a 3-year period<br>Use the allocation formula of the previous 5-year history of participation by residents, nonresidents, and outfitted nonresidents |

Table 7. Continued.

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| | | The allocation formula for nonresident hunters can be adjusted if the percentage is >25%; adjustments can be made down to 25% nonresidents<br>In the case of a greater need than capping the zone, a controlled hunt framework can be developed<br>Reduce hunter opportunity equally among weapon types, if specific weapon-type hunts occur |
| | Increase black bear harvest by 2-fold and increase mountain lion harvest by 1.5-fold for 3-5 years following significant decline in calf:cow ratios and decline in elk populations<br>Harvest >75% of wolves and then maintain lower wolf numbers annually for 3-5 years in specific focal areas (e.g., zones with low over-winter calf survival) | Implement predator management activities where elk populations are not meeting objectives and predation is identified as a primary limiting factor<br>Direct use of Animal Damage Control funds to manage predators in priority areas<br>Encourage hunter-harvest of predators through news releases, articles, and the website |
| Develop an elk monitoring program that includes modeling or monitoring zone population parameters during years between aerial sightability surveys | By 2020, develop methods and tools to help staff assess zone population status, over-winter calf survival, adult cow survival, winter calf:cow ratios, body condition, and adult cow age structure | Estimate elk abundance at the zone level every 3-5 years using the aerial sightability model<br>Collect annual biological data on elk populations<br>Use population models to estimate population status and trend in years when sightability surveys are not conducted |
| Develop biological studies to improve population, predator, and habitat management capabilities | By 2020, develop the ability to reliably predict impact of predators on elk at different elk and predator abundance; and in different landscape scenarios<br>By 2020, better model the link between landscape characteristics to elk population parameters; understanding of how major | Determine the effect of predator harvest and season timing on elk survival and production<br>Evaluate effects of wolf abundance on different levels of bull survival and harvest<br>Determine how landscape changes in habitat (e.g., invasive plants, fire frequency, etc.) influence elk population dynamics |

Table 7. Continued.

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| | habitat changes affect elk populations | Continue research on impacts of wolves and other predator populations |
| Implement proactive measures to minimize or compensate for elk depredations | Increase landowner support of elk in zones where agricultural impacts (crop and property damage) was identified as limiting population growth<br><br>Evaluate regulatory changes that allow landowners to legally possess animals taken by kill permit | Use landowner tags as a means to increase landowner support of elk where elk are causing damage<br><br>In zones with elk populations limited because of crop and property damage, evaluate other ways of compensating landowners for elk damage<br><br>Use the Negotiated Rulemaking Process to revise landowner permit programs that might result in depredation release agreements<br><br>Work with county commissions on new infrastructure developments in elk habitat to provide information on possible future effects on elk populations and mitigate for new developments<br><br>Collaborate with federal land managers to assure range conditions provide adequate forage for elk in areas prone to depredations<br><br>Consider providing additional water developments for elk on public lands to lure elk from chronic depredation areas<br><br>Use hunting as the primary tool to manage agricultural impacts<br><br>Whenever possible, create opportunities to allow youth hunters, hunters with disabilities, or veterans to harvest depredating elk<br><br>Investigate use of easements associated with new development as mitigation for loss of habitat |

Table 7. Continued.

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| | By 2016, conduct a comprehensive review to identify innovative programs and analyze funding requirements and sources for implementing large-scale, permanent, depredation solutions | Explore costs and applicability of innovative long-term techniques such as crop exchanges, land purchases, land exchanges, use of lure crops, improved adjacent range conditions, or conservation easements<br>Coordinate with neighboring states to learn about costs and effectiveness of techniques not typically used in Idaho, such as large-scale fencing of agricultural lands |
| | By 2015, hire an 8-month technician in each IDFG Region to assist the Landowner-Sportsmen Coordinator with disbursement of depredation supplies, elk hazing, elk removal, and hunter management (where agricultural impacts are a limiting factor) | Regions work with the Wildlife Bureau to identify funding sources for new technicians |
| | Beginning in 2017, annually identify ≥1 landowner or area per zone (limited by agricultural impacts) that may be appropriate for innovative long-term solutions | Meet with concerned landowners regularly to develop and implement action plans<br>Emphasize use of permanent solutions (e.g., stack yards and depredation release agreements) |
| | Provide educational materials explaining the role of sportsmen in depredation issues and landowner relations by 2015 | Be proactive with landowners in areas of high depredation issues or potential depredation issues<br>Inform sportsmen of their role in reducing depredation problems and the importance of maintaining positive relationships with landowners |
| Compass Objective: Provide a diversity of elk hunting opportunities | | |
| Management Direction | Performance Objective | Strategy |
| Assess hunter desires for different types of elk | Conduct a statewide elk hunter opinion survey by 2020 to gauge hunter opinions and measure | Repeat questions asked during 2012 statewide elk hunter survey to determine whether hunter |

Table 7. Continued.

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| hunting opportunities | satisfaction with elk management and hunting opportunities | perceptions, desires, or priorities have shifted |
| | By 2014, further develop options to allow hunters to hunt annually in >1 zone | Establish specific criteria for zone inclusion in an expanded opportunity program<br>Develop the program to ensure that it will not deteriorate elk hunting or the quality of elk hunting experience in any zone<br>Develop strategies and criteria to manage changes in hunter distribution and harvest as the expanded opportunity program evolves<br>Gather hunter feedback through various methods to assess which options or restrictions hunters find acceptable |
| Provide annual elk hunting opportunities | Maintain ≥75,000 elk hunters and 400,000 elk hunter-days annually<br>Maintain populations at objectives | Continue to offer general season elk hunting opportunities to provide annual hunting<br>Maintain a diversity of weapon-type hunting opportunities<br>Adjust hunting opportunities equally among established weapon types in areas where biological conditions warrant opportunity changes<br>Increase elk hunter satisfaction through expanding hunting opportunities |
| | Maintain ≥14 bulls:100 cows postseason in general season hunt areas | Implement habitat improvements, hunting season changes, motorized hunting rules, or predator management actions to achieve bull management objectives |
| Provide a diversity of hunting opportunity, | By 2015, annually maintain 10 “quality” and 10 “high quality” hunting opportunities | Provide ≥1 “quality” or “high quality” bull hunting opportunity in each region by 2015 |

Table 7. Continued.

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| including socially desirable and biologically sustainable levels of antlerless and mature bull opportunity | throughout the state | |
| | By 2015, improve efforts to inform hunters about the diversity of hunting opportunities available throughout Idaho | Include hunt-specific descriptive information about what hunters may expect to find for quality and quantity of game, hunter density, and drawing odds in big game regulations by 2014 |
| | Provide special hunting opportunities in each IDFG administrative region annually | Provide high-harvest opportunities (primarily cow and youth hunts) annually where populations are meeting overall population objectives or to minimize the loss of agricultural crops<br>Maintain elk hunting and viewing opportunities on any IDFG-managed lands where elk occur |
| | Annually provide 2 or more different weapon hunts in general seasons within each IDFG administrative region | Where harvest characteristics allow, increase or decrease hunting opportunities proportionally among established weapon types in areas where biological conditions warrant opportunity changes |

Table 7. Continued.

| Compass Objective: Improve citizen involvement in the decision-making process | | |
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| Management Direction | Performance Objective | Strategy |
| Increase open public input regarding elk management by increased use of electronic media | Increase open public input regarding elk management by 50% over the next 5 years, inclusive of electronic media | Develop a public input process to be used in addition to our traditional methods; acquire public input as a process, rather than an event<br>Target an input process that is transparent, with clear purpose, goals, structure, and commitment<br>Provide for open input through electronic media and at an open house or other event where input can be obtained person-to-person<br>Invite the public to events through newspapers, direct mail, radio, e-mail, pod-casts, Twitter, and websites<br>Investigate new methods for providing information and obtaining public input |
| Increase the breadth of participation in elk management decisions by targeting opinions of a random sample of hunters for substantial decisions | Increase the breadth of participation by annually targeting the opinions of a 5% random sample of hunters for substantial decisions | Provide for more inclusive planning by designing the input process along 2 lines – random surveys and open input<br>Design random surveys as a prominent tool in decision-making |
| Develop and maintain an open public sounding board list at the regional level | Develop a public sounding board list of ≥50 individuals at the regional level | Communicate regularly with sounding board list members (as a group and individually) through electronic media both to provide information, and to receive early input processes |
| Provide timely feedback on decisions to the public | Deliver feedback and results to the public within 10 business days after a decision is made | Summarize input and provide immediate, direct feedback to the public<br>Communicate results concisely and distribute through |

Table 7. Continued.

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| | | a variety of communication tools<br>Cooperate with NGOs to help deliver information back to interested public |
| Compass Objective: Increase the capacity of habitat to support elk | | |
| Management Direction | Performance Objective | Strategy |
| Improve key summer, winter, and transitional habitats on public and private lands that provide adequate habitat for elk populations to meet statewide objectives | Develop a statewide GIS elk habitat database by September 2015 | Identify seasonal elk habitats and elk habitat where development, human growth, and other issues may lead to degradation or loss of elk habitat within the next 20 years<br>Incorporate into GIS and enhance the map of seasonal elk habitats to include elk habitat statewide |
| | Develop resources and information to restore and enhance elk habitat on public and private lands in Idaho<br>Develop a prioritized list of properties and projects for protection, restoration, or enhancement of elk habitat in each region and update annually; develop and begin to prioritize list in 2014<br>Develop a database to annually track acres protected, restored, or enhanced statewide by 2016 | Once developed, use the statewide map of seasonal elk habitat to assist prioritization of properties and projects for habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement<br>Work with conservation organizations, elected officials, federal land managers, and private landowners to provide long-term conservation measures to enhance and protect important elk habitat<br>As opportunities arise, acquire interest in property, such as conservation easements and fee title acquisitions, where IDFG management can provide exceptional benefits to elk and associated recreation |
| | Annually coordinate with public land agencies and county governments to remain involved in habitat restoration following weed control and wildfire rehabilitation efforts | Work with land management agencies to identify key elk habitats and provide expertise and support efforts to secure funding for plantings, seedings, and noxious weed control efforts following wildfires or prescribed |

Table 7. Continued.

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| | | burn projects |
| | By September 2014, use the maps of seasonal elk habitats to identify ≥3 high priority elk habitat or migration corridor areas in each zone limited by habitat<br>By March 2015, use the maps of high priority elk areas needing habitat enhancements to strategize with public and private land managers regarding elk habitat projects<br>Annually recommend or promote projects to public and private landowners that would treat or improve >10,000 acres of high priority elk habitat or migration corridor areas in each zone limited by habitat | Develop habitat projects that improve elk habitat at a landscape level<br>Work with public land managers to minimize impacts of development on elk habitat<br>Promote well-designed forest management projects that closely resemble natural disturbance for elk habitat |
| Find new ways to efficiently and effectively monitor habitat | Convene a team of biologists to evaluate elk habitat monitoring needs, monitoring design, and funding needs. Submit recommendations to the Wildlife Bureau Chief by the end of 2014<br>By 2017, evaluate satellite imagery as a cost-effective and reliable habitat monitoring tool | Develop and maintain tools to help with elk management decisions and elk habitat monitoring efforts |
| Integrate habitat assessment in the development of elk population goals | Convene a team of biologists by 2015 to evaluate needs for incorporating current or potential elk habitat into the development of elk population goals<br>Once needs are assessed, formulate a plan for incorporating current or potential elk habitat into the development of elk population goals by 2017 | Develop habitat information and a process for incorporating current or potential elk habitat into the development of elk population goals |

Table 7. Continued.

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| Increase IDFG involvement in long- and short-term land-use planning efforts by providing information, analysis, and recommendations to improve and preserve elk habitats | Develop a written and approved technical assistance strategy for land-use actions which affect elk habitat by 2015 | Use the Idaho Elk Management Plan as the basis for technical review and comment on land-use proposals that affect elk<br><br>Encourage federal land management agencies to maintain overall motorized route densities that are within the 0.7–1.7 mi/mi2 "moderate" range as well as large areas that are within the "low" range (<0.7 mi/mi2) as described in Wisdom et al. (2000) |
| | Annually coordinate with and provide technical assistance to federal land management agencies and county planning and zoning commissions to stay up-to-date on projects or developments that may affect elk habitat and to ensure elk management issues are considered in land-use planning decisions<br><br>Provide technical assistance that identifies methods to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to elk habitat from land- and water-use projects; seek mitigation for adverse impacts to elk<br><br>Fulfill all elk habitat data requests regarding elk habitat information maintained by IDFG | Build partnerships and share data with land management agencies and private landowners that are responsible for management of elk habitat<br><br>Distribute layers from the elk habitat and elk use databases, along with habitat improvement recommendations, to land management agencies, cities, and counties for use in land-use policies and planning<br><br>Continue IDFG involvement in long-term, landscape-scale planning efforts, including federal agency land-use plans, and actively pursue opportunities for IDFG involvement on interdisciplinary teams to benefit elk<br><br>Continue IDFG involvement in short-term, site-specific, project review and implementation<br><br>Promote federal, state, and county land-use projects and practices that improve elk habitat<br><br>Participate in planning and zoning commission meetings when development proposals that may impact elk habitat are expected<br><br>Continue to provide technical assistance to USFS, BLM, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), private landowners, and county commissions to promote and |

Table 7. Continued.

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| | | enhance elk habitat<br>Provide expertise on prioritizing critical elk habitats for weed control and restoration |
| | By 2015, become a member of Interdisciplinary Teams, Burn Plan Teams, and other planning teams<br>By 2015, for each zone where habitat is the most limiting factor, submit additional specific recommendations to Federal land managers regarding range management in areas where elk range needs improvement | Ensure that wildfire rehabilitation efforts include vegetation that provides quality elk habitat<br>Become a Cooperating Agency or complete other agreements to formalize our role with each U.S. National Forest and BLM District to facilitate participation on forest plan revisions, travel plans, and resource management plans and to promote elk habitat projects at a landscape level<br>Collaborate with Federal land managers to assure range conditions provide adequate forage for elk |
| | Complete development of a highway corridor-linkage database by 2016<br>Identify priority locations for reducing highway mortalities in each IDFG region by 2016 | Continue the partnership with the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) and Federal Highway Administration to reduce elk highway mortality<br>Identify and implement strategies to protect important elk linkage corridors<br>Encourage county use of the highway corridor-linkage database in making land-use decisions |
| Compass Objective: Eliminate the impacts of wildlife diseases on elk populations, livestock, and humans | | |
| Management Direction | Performance Objective | Strategy |
| Minimize the influence of disease as a limiting factor in elk populations | Annually conduct surveillance for exposure to and infection with diseases of concern for elk | Collect samples from sufficient numbers of elk to detect the presence of diseases including brucellosis and CWD using hunters, agency personnel, or the general public<br>Investigate unusual occurrences of morbidity or |

Table 7. Continued.

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| | | mortality in elk<br>Manage elk populations to reduce disease risk |
| | Annually sample elk statewide to detect CWD at 1% prevalence | Collect samples from hunter-killed animals at check stations, taxidermists, or butcher shops for CWD testing<br>Implement the Emergency CWD Response Plan upon detection |
| | Annually sample 300 elk in eastern Idaho to detect changes in brucellosis seroprevalence | Collect samples from hunter-killed or agency-handled elk to detect changes in brucellosis seroprevalence<br>Implement the Brucellosis Management Plan with emphasis on maintaining separation between elk and cattle during high risk periods |
| Compass Objective: Increase public knowledge and understanding of elk populations, hunting, and management in Idaho | | |
| Management Direction | Performance Objective | Strategy |
| Increase public understanding of the value of elk and their ecology and management | Using the final elk plan as a guide, write a user-friendly elk management document for the general public; complete by June 2014 | Final document will be available at regional offices, at events, and on our website |
| | Maintain Elk Management webpage after plan is completed to provide the public a "one-stop shop" to review data, and submit for posting suitable elk-related stories and elk news (including habitat projects to benefit elk); update twice a year<br>Use chat rooms and YouTube videos to communicate with public about the past elk | Develop and post information describing available elk hunting experiences and opportunities<br>Encourage use of IDFG website to acquire information about elk management<br>Possibly partner with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation for habitat news |

Table 7. Continued.

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| | hunting season and proposed hunting seasons statewide starting 2015 | |
| | Identify locations and establish 2-4 kiosks in the field discussing interaction of habitat, predation, and other factors and elk ecology by 2018 | Improve awareness of elk ecology and management for hunters and non-hunters |
| | Conduct a survey to evaluate public understanding of elk management by 2020 | Use results to target future educational efforts regarding elk management |
| | By 2017, develop educational materials to illustrate the role and history of hunting in society and conservation<br>Issue a special Elk Edition of Fish and Game News each year<br>By December 2014, develop short video vignettes for webpage that explain what elk management is, what we measure, and how to get involved | Develop a long-term strategic elk information campaign; begin crafting and distributing materials related to this effort via all practical outlets available, including electronic media, nature centers, museum exhibits, fair displays, office lobbies<br>Work with NGOs interested in common education messages and goals to promote the information |
| | Develop information about elk ecology, viewing locations, and elk management by 2016<br>Deliver a *Wild about Elk* program to 50 teachers by 2016<br>Devote 1 issue of the children's newspaper, *Wildlife Express*, to elk and elk management | Improve understanding of elk among Idaho's school children<br>Continue to deliver "*Wild about Elk*" program annually<br>Distribute information in schools, hunter education classes, fair booths, hunter conventions, and workshops |